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X AT OBERAMMERGAU

*By the same Author*

THE UNKNOWN GODDESS : POEMS  
PORTRAITS BY INFERENCE

X AT OBERAMMERGAU  
A POEM

by  
HUMBERT WOLFE



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TO  
TOMMY  
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## PART I

### PROEM

#### I

WOTAN—the ancient—is not mocked. He waits  
neither by death defeated nor by the doom  
vainly imagined by the spinning Fates,  
He for whom Hell is but the tiring-room,  
whither he has gone  
greatly to gird his dark avenging iron on.

Still in Valhalla, though fallen, the legend runs,  
written by the formless earth, when first it trembled  
out of the void, that at the last the Huns  
shall see again, like thunder-clouds assembled,  
upon a breath  
returned their vast divinities of hate and death.

Some later god of love and self-denial  
has crept along the valleys, and in cold malice  
snatched from men's lips war's high destructive phial,  
and chattered in its place the coward chalice,  
whose only power  
is to kiss the thorn and desecrate the flower.

Swords in the sky! This demi-god for token  
of his dominion offers a lathe of wood,  
whereon himself hangs pitiful and broken,  
the first poltroon in terror's brotherhood  
who own—for Lord  
pale pantaloons nailed to his wooden sword.

Time in the mountains is little as the sigh  
of a wind in the firs. At their appointed seasons  
blossoms in their troop with standards passing by  
are scarce the prey of spring's recurrent treasons  
before the snows  
are all narcissus again and the Alpine rose.

This year and that year, that century and this  
from rangéd foreheads in whose coronet  
the unbridled diamond of the sheer abyss  
is with the snowy pearls of distance set,  
attempt in vain  
to wrest one bastion from the least moraine.

It matters naught to Kofel, therefore, splendid  
against the dawn and private with the stars,  
how oft and how translucently attended,  
the sun in gold has trampled down his scars,  
how oft the moon  
has lulled his snows into her own and silver swoon.

Nor does he care how often through the firs  
what bells have rung what carillons of praise  
through the deep valley, or what worshippers  
through what to-morrows, as in what yesterdays,  
dim as a wraith  
will fleetingly profess their false diaphanous faith.

A second may pass, a century, an aeon.

What matter? At the moment which he swore  
over the symbol of the Galilean  
hoisting the toothed and crooked cross of Thor,  
the world struck dumb,  
Wotan with the blood of the Lamb will paint  
his kingdom come.

## II

AT last through a world benighted  
the flares of freedom burn.  
Arminius! the torch is lighted!  
Awake! Remember! Return!

Soldier and priest will you tarry  
who heard the buccina crack  
on the broken whisper 'Varre!  
Give me my legions back!'

Who watched the Northern Valkyries  
in triumph riding home,  
when the eagles flew to their eyries  
in the conquered hills of Rome.

For behold! the German people  
are beset by a greater host,  
whose shield is the bell in the steeple,  
and whose sword is the Holy Ghost.

And their Führer is such as no man  
can parry the weaponless stroke  
of hands that prevail, where the Roman  
steel-gauntleted spear-thrust broke.

He has stormed the embattled city  
with love that has ferried the Styx.  
He has stolen our strength with pity,  
and our hate with the Crucifix.

But now to veins bloodless and arid  
by their own volition drawn  
through the shoals of a faith miscarried  
flow the red tides of dawn.

A wind has blown through the larches  
from the West on a rising note  
to the filched far Eastern marches,  
and has taken the world by the throat.

We have prayed in dark to the Nornies,  
the black cock is sacrificed.  
Arminius ! return where the morn is,  
the risen German Christ.

### III

PROREL said to La Meije,  
' If they murder, what is men's wage ? '  
La Meije said to Prorel,  
' Their self-created Hell.'  
Croix de Toulouse said to Mélezin,  
' But to conquer is to be man.'  
Mélezin said to Croix de Toulouse,  
' Men have only what they refuse.'  
Kofel said to the mountains of France,  
' Glory rewards romance.'  
The mountains of France said to Kofel,  
' Offal to offal.'



# I REHEARSAL

## CHORUS AT OBERAMMERGAU

### THE REGULAR CHORUS

IT is midwinter in the village. Still  
brood the mud houses, dark and closely shuttered.  
No sound, save where across the starless hill  
a wind, as little as a thought unuttered,  
stirs the grey hem  
of leaves upon the olive-trees at Bethlehem.

Yet is there one wakeful upon a sour  
pallet of straw, though bedded in a byre,  
like any other woman in her hour,  
who feels life, tiger as a forest fire,  
blaze through the earth  
news of her individual Saviour's birth.

She gazes, as the waves of anguish thunder,  
vaguely upon a square at the Manger's end,  
and sees, as though the wall were split asunder,  
beyond the frame thrown backward a light ascend,  
and lo! the bars  
loom like a cross that stabs against the stars.

He lies asleep against her, the star touching  
the small strange face with a far pencilling,  
as though beyond the world a hand were reaching  
to sign in gold the profile of a king,  
but unconsoled  
she sees the shadow-bars unmodified with gold.

Fades now the star, and by their camels kneeling,  
framed in the doorway, where the dawn engages  
their coloured silks with deeper colour stealing  
out of the East triumphant, stand the Magers  
with bended brow  
world without end to-day at Oberammergau.

## II

### AN IRREGULAR INVISIBLE CHORUS SINGING FAR OFF

#### I

IT would, I suppose, be far down,  
as the light goes craggily down, as a broken statue  
lying in the deserted suburb of an ignoble town.  
(Do you remember that I loved you, or did I hate you?)

O the bright naked shoulders of the hills—  
Victorian lovelies like Moselle bottles or Hock,  
till darkness falling in a storm of night-black daffodils  
cracks like a rock.

That is an eagle circling—rising and ringing  
over My Lady of the Snows (that was the name they gave Her).  
We went up to her mountain-chapel at daybreak singing.  
(When God is dead in the mountains, who can save Her?)

Ring free, eagle, ring free over the summit.  
Wings and freedom are no longer our affair.  
We pushed open the door, fearing that God might slam it.  
There was nobody there.

But afterwards—  
 The Three Magas are a Bar at Mont Genève,  
 and the Tristan chords  
 are modelled by mass-production in Sèvres.

And we shall die like marionettes  
 qui font, font, font  
 leur petit tour—n'est-ce pas—(how one forgets!)  
 and so are gone.

They are gone, but there is a chute,  
 falling a hundred feet into the Romanche,  
 faint as a rusty flute  
 played by a French

lover of Victor Hugo, and  
 A Little Music. Can you hear it?  
 As though Mélisande  
 were preserved in spirit

and her voice like cherries  
 (cérises eau-de vie) whispered 'Alas!'  
 (as the chute freezes in winter), 'Where is,  
 where is Pelléas?'

### III

## DISCUSSION OF THE CAST

HERR HANS KANALGERUCH had flaps like fins emerging from his quantity of chins.

Thereafter unexpectedly ensued a devastating study in the nude with lips, nose, forehead and close-shaven hair all stripped, and all embarrassingly bare.

And this at times was inconvenient because the thoughts to which his nature bent were such as would in unregenerate times have been regarded as potential crimes, and which, though patriotic virtues now, tended to leave such traces on his brow as made one wonder if his actions were collected by a careless scavenger.

Gangster by choice, storm-trooper, and then putscher, his civic occupation as pork-butcher, made it seem more than probable that he might have been designed as Nature's Anti-Semite by God and by His first Pan-German Bishop to visit Oberammergau, and dish up a Passion-Play, purged of the ugly libel that the Jews had some connection with the Bible,

and which would greatly move, with every sign  
of suitable devotion to the Rhine,  
to the great climax where instead of crying,  
'Wherefore has Thou deserted me,' in dying  
the Central Figure magnificently rallies  
to pass exclaiming, 'Deutschland über alles.'  
Herr Hans Kanalgeruch—the ex storm-trooper  
woke for an instant from a drunken stupor,  
and looking in his sleep-engendered anger  
rather like something that a Minnesinger  
had trodden in, and then forgotten to clear,  
muttered across his fifteenth mug of beer :  
'What can this mean—these voices like a moth  
discovered somewhere hidden in the froth,  
and as one drinks, one feels faint flutterings  
and suddenly one's mouth is full of wings ?  
This must not be. The Nazi doctrine vetoes  
all wings save those of beetles and mosquitoes.'

He ceased. One of the startled villagers  
gave him the script, and asked, 'Which is the verse  
Your Worship does not relish ? If you'd show it  
we'd put the offending passage to the poet.  
Or do you find the transition in the aria  
abrupt, perhaps, from Jesus to Bavaria ?'

Pines are not trees for themselves. In valleys lost they murmur to one another, ghost by ghost from some tall Paradise estranged. It seems as though the mountains distant in their dreams entranced their needled quiet. At royal ease the eagle from his eyrie in the screes rings up and out until the peaks below, at first a range of Etnas trailing snow flatten and dip. And still his carven face sets for the sun, his wings alone with space. He soars, but at the huge embattled rim the vast and tilted earth strains after him, the utter rock, glacier, and far behind rocked, and yet maddened, by the mountain-wind streaming down gorges, isled on awful shelves, drawn by an impulse older than themselves, restless for ever in their marching lines, sheer for the eagle strike the charmed pines. Such are the pines at Oberammergau on Kofel's flank. And Hans observing how they clutter the edge of heaven, dimly hipped by that unshared ascension, reads the script. His eyes, 'fish-blue in the surrounding red, like a boy's marbles shot into his head by accident, grow, as the words are garbled beneath his breath, more eminently marbled. 'He lies asleep against her, the star touching

the small grave face,' he mutters, vaguely clutching his forehead. 'But My Lady of the Snows, and marionettes that die, and heaven knows what rubbish else concerning Melisande—there's something here I do not understand. Or is it possible—the sun—the beer—imagined something that I did not hear, or did I drop asleep and dream the stuff?'

'The words,' he says aloud, 'are well enough. It's something in the manner of the choir, something (how shall I say?) like soft desire, an echo of some half-remembered sermon sweet, pleading, generous—in a word ungerman. The thing must stop. I noticed it begin the very day we took that stranger in to play the central part. I know it's true that I agreed. What else was there to do? Poor Heinrich ill, nobody else in sight, the whole thing at a standstill when one night the man appeared suddenly out of the snow asking his way, as though he didn't know that—and most other things—only too well.'

'His voice,' John interrupted, 'like a bell rang in our ears—(you, Peter, it was that said



it chimed like music risen from the dead).  
He looked upon us—making every man turn  
to where, framed in the doorway with his lantern  
lifted on high, he wore so mild a grace,  
so apt a loving-kindness on his face,  
as though drawn hither to his appointed tryst,  
that one among us cried, “Behold the Christ!”’  
‘It happened that as he knocked we sat at table  
waiting for meat. Like villagers in a fable  
by Grimm we gazed with a dull sense of danger  
touched with delight,’ said Pilate, ‘on the stranger  
who, powdered with snow on beard, and parted hair,  
came almost like an answer to a prayer.  
We bade him break a crust of bread, and tarry  
at least until the storm had passed. No hurry,  
we said, to freeze to death. He smiled and entered  
as though unconscious how all eyes were centred  
upon his alien form. He took his place  
as he was bid. And, as I breathed the Grace  
“God bless this bread to us,” I saw him take it  
and, as I thought, with such a gesture break it,  
as he might use in the play when loving and tender  
Christ to the Twelve his body does surrender.’  
‘So musingly he gazed,’ said John, ‘so lit  
with love, and all the world well lost for it.’

'O he can act,' broke in Kanalgeruch,  
'and never better than, when, with a sideways look  
to see that he is watched, he plays his part  
as though he were alone with his own heart.  
I don't deny that I, when others pressed  
the man to try the rôle, joined with the rest,  
but only, when cross-questioned whence, and how,  
and being what, he came to Ammergau,  
he swore that, though a stranger hither, he was  
no less than we, familiar of the Cross.  
And even then I doubted if a man  
could be whole-heartedly a Christian,  
who when I pressed him to denounce the Jews  
would only say that Christ was theirs to lose.  
I let it pass. If the man could release us  
from all that hopeless search of ours for Jesus,  
some risk was justified. But from the minute  
he trod the boards, I knew the devil was in it.

Something came on with him, sweet, womanish,  
yet smooth as the silver action of a fish  
dominating the water, something that with a thin  
and maudlin finger touched upon the skin,  
yet something that so changed and modified him  
that nothing in the theatre could live beside him.  
His voice disturbed the air and made the stage

appear to be his private heritage,  
where all the rest, figures of lath and plaster,  
were shadows round the candle of the Master.  
You felt it too from the first moment.' 'Yes,  
I felt a slow insurgent bitterness,'  
said Judas slowly, 'deep in my heart as far  
and foreign as the sorrow of a star,  
yet mine of me. He did but need to look  
upon me and, it seemed, my spirit shook  
with a dark fever of hatred. When he spoke  
his final words my very body broke  
as into waves of sound, that could not stay him,  
but cried aloud upon the night, "Betray him."  
And still the anguish grows with every time  
I become Judas, and repeat my crime.'

'And Pontius, you.' 'Why,' Pontius answered, 'not  
with the strange pangs that ravage Iscariot  
was I assailed at first. But only later  
when at the head of the stairs as procurator,  
wearing the wreath about my Roman brow,  
I lost the sense of Oberammergau,  
and looked upon a raging mob beneath,  
Jews from the forehead to the blackened teeth,  
saw the tossed beards, the eyes as brown as mud,  
smelt sandalwood and oranges and blood,

and all my mind was suddenly filled with doubt  
as the centurions brought the prisoner out.  
He did not ask nor plead, but the great quiet  
he brought with him flew upward through the riot  
like an eagle through the wind, and seeing him alone,  
discarded, unprotected, overthrown,  
a king betrayed in his imperial city,  
there swept upon me such a sense of pity  
for madness that slew, and madness even madder  
of the slain, who died to make his bones a ladder  
to some incredible heaven, and would not curse  
even in the moment of doom his murderers,  
that as I gave him up and heard the cheers  
almost I could have wept.' 'And with such tears,'  
said John, who sat beside him, 'as even now  
darken your eyes at Oberammergau.'

A young and April star, half-hidden by smoke  
from the long China pipes, serenely broke  
the golden flag of sundown at the peak  
of Kofel. Dimly through the curling reek  
the bearded faces glimmered in the twilight  
in deeper shadow falling, as the high light  
when a pipe drew, with a momentary flake,  
of pigment deeper than the crimson lake,  
touched cheek and brow only to leave them fainter

in the increasing dark, as though a painter had cleaned his palette, and suddenly turning back had squeezed a tube of red against the black.

Kanalgeruch looked round the room and smiled, showing his teeth on the left. 'A little child shall lead us, and the blonde Teutonic lion lie down with the Jewish lamb and rebuild Zion in our Bavarian streets, till every dog amongst you kennels in the synagogue.'

'Dog,' shouted Peter, rising. 'If you itch for truth,' snarled Hans, 'I might have added bitch.'

All leaped to their feet, John seeking to disarm Peter who struck with a knife. Hans raised an arm, and took the knife-thrust smiling. 'With what heart and verve,' said he, 'Peter, you play your part. But now enough of fooling. I'll be brief. (Thank you, I do not need a handkerchief. It's only a scratch.) Which of you has not seen the slow diversion of the Magdalene, and the hands pressed, as though they sought to smother the heart within her body, of Mary Mother. Are you content to smile into your hats until the town is littered with Jewish brats? Sit down the lot of you. No time for faction.'

His voice rang like a trumpet. 'Now for action!'

Like waves of heat across a molten plate  
fear, ugly knowledge, rage and furious hate  
twisted their faces till they glittered lewd as  
the devil in the wilderness. But Judas  
looked crookedly across the table. 'You,'  
he purred, 'suggest our Jesus is a Jew.  
That, if I may express it so, is odd,  
particularly in the Son of God.'  
'Upon what grounds,' cried John, 'do you traduce  
the man attuned to every Christian use  
by nature and by habit? He walks in faith  
so palpable you all but see its wraith  
veil with the shadow fallen on his face  
the brightness of his too exceeding grace.  
Aye, he is such as merely to stand by him  
as Peter said, is to pray.' 'And therefore deny him,'  
mocked Judas. 'Peter! it is, I think, your cue.'  
'A Jew,' said Peter with strange eyes. 'A Jew!  
Can it be true?' He bit an angry tooth  
upon his lip. 'Truth, Peter, what is truth?'  
said Pilate. 'But no doubt the Herr Direktor  
has ample proof—or does he merely suspect, or  
does he permit himself a little jest  
at our expense. Pray tell us. It were best,'  
he added sharply, 'to be clear and brief.'  
'It is not friends a matter of belief,'  
Kanalgeruch said calmly, 'but of fact.'

I caught him late last evening in the act of speaking to the village whore. She flew at my approach. "Her father was a Jew," I said. "You know the German law for them." "The same," he answered, "as in Jerusalem. Cast the first stone if you be sinless, Hans." "The law I speak of is not God's but man's. To dally with a Jewess is to disown all Germany and make the race your own." "My own," he said, and looking at the steeple against the stars. "My own—my chosen people," and turned from the church, as though he seemed to dread it. "You are a Jew!" He answered, "You have said it," and passed into the night without a word.'

So silent was the room when they had heard, that you could hear the knees against the cloth with the singed accent of a circling moth. 'If this be true,' said Pontius. 'It is true,' the other cried. 'What would you have us do?' 'It is a lie,' said John, 'and were it not, which of us all will play Iscariot? Here are the Twelve. Answer beyond all cavil—' He faced them all. 'Which of you is a devil?' The flame about him awed them for a second. Then Hans to one or two about him beckoned

and left the room to Peter and to John.

‘Whither,’ cried Peter, ‘and wherefore are they gone?’

‘For some ill purpose,’ answered John. ‘Go thou and strike for Christ in Oberammergau.’

Peter groped at his mouth. ‘But if he be a Jew,’ he muttered. ‘In Gethsemane they slept while he was in damnation’s power.

Peter, can you not wait with him one hour?’

‘But Jews,’ moaned Peter. ‘Let the rest deny him. How many times shall Peter crucify him?’

‘Blasphemy,’ shouted Peter. ‘You speak as though he were that other. No leave my hand. I go to speak with the rest.’ ‘Yes, Peter, keep your trust,’ as the door opened, spoke the voice of Christ.



#### IV

### AN IRREGULAR INVISIBLE CHORUS HEARD FAR OFF

THAT was a hawk stooping  
    (Veux-tu? Fiche-moi la paix,)  
feathered aeroplane dropping  
    your bombs into the day

so that it shatters in splinters,  
    and drifts down in blackened rags,  
in the dreary midwinter  
    of these desolate crags.

That was a hawk wheeling  
    between the whin-bushes and the moss.  
(White dove, are you feeling  
    the cold shadow of the cross,

cast by the outstretched body  
    and the wings for the rail,  
with the talons for the bloody  
    inescapable nail?)

That was a hawk killing.

(Did we not warn you, white dove?

But if the spirit be willing,  
and the pathway be love?)

Vastly circling and ringing

the hawk returns to his eyrie.

The birds, that were silenced, are singing.

Why are you weeping, Mary?

## TAIL-PIECE

### , THE REGULAR CHORUS (ENDING THEIR DAY'S REHEARSAL)

FADES now the star, and, by their camels kneeling  
framed in the doorway where the dawn engages  
their coloured silks with deeper colour stealing  
out of the East triumphant, stand the Mages  
with bended brow  
world without end to-day at Oberammergau.



## PART II

### PROEM

CRUELTY may be no more than ignorant terror,  
or, mounting higher, may but serve to prove  
that men still seek to shatter in the mirror  
of their own heart the thing they dare not love,  
and thus, unwilling  
and lost, it is the killer who is killed in killing.

That is the danger of love—that what is human  
then scorning death as an indifferent thief  
breaks all the locks of life, and man with woman  
win by excess bright courage to be brief,  
but at the price  
first of their own, then of their lover's sacrifice.

And there are gods in this example made  
for whom love is the snapping on the cord—  
Wotan, who lives by terror, himself afraid  
of the suspended weight of his own sword—  
all gods who move,  
and have their being, in the image of thwarted love.

Their essence is to be false as they are fleeting,  
their deity is death. But further far  
life, like a seabird in the midnight beating  
against death's beacon urgent as a star,  
falls like a moth  
bearing down death in a light engulfing both.

This is another love that has no need  
to give or take, to slumber or to waken.  
It has no motion yet in its intimate speed  
the source of life itself is overtaken,  
and it is lavish  
with all the leisurely passion time cannot ravish.

Another love! Cover your eyes! Its force  
is to be forceless with such exceeding power  
that being and doing are nothing in its course  
but the two aspects of a single flower  
that in the stream  
mix shade with shadow, dream with deeper dream.

Cover your eyes lest all your senses languish.  
Nor dare to guess in its unswerving choice  
whether its joy be some exceeding anguish,  
its sorrow victory. This is the voice  
which deifies  
the dust of life with silence. Cover your eyes.

# PORTRAIT OF A DICTATOR

## I

*By Himself*

MY country, plunging like a frightened horse,  
reared at the sheer abyss. I reined and rode it.  
To hearts, with mercy broken, I with force  
brought healing and the axe to which they owed it.

Betrayed by cowards and by knaves misled  
they only prayed, like frightened girls. I came.  
I slew the cowards and the knaves are dead.  
Salute me. Resurrection is my name.

*By the Recording Angel*

**HIS** country maddened by the cunning spur  
with which he barbed it, plunged at the abyss  
as he asserts. He made a jade of her,  
and reined and rode her down the precipice.

**Some** he called cowards. (They did not fear to die  
for conscience' sake.) **Some** knaves (a dark infection  
who would not purchase freedom with a lie).

Salute him, Wotan. He is your resurrection.



## II

### CAIAPHAS SOLILOQUIZES

‘ONE came to me by night, and drawing near  
whispered, “High Priest, the glory still increases  
about the head of Him you seek and fear.

What is the price?” I counted thirty pieces.  
He heard the silver chink. “I shall pay dear  
for this,” he murmured low. “The law releases  
you of all blame.” “I go to Him from here.

Let the guard take the Man whom Judas kisses.”  
“Touch pitch? Say rather that the meanest tool  
used in God’s service for His people’s good,  
(What matter if he hanged himself, poor fool!)  
loses its taint in that bright neighbourhood,”  
said Caiaphas.’ “Und meinen Sie das Gleiche  
Herr Muller, Bischof in dem dritten Reiche?”

### III

## IN THE HOUSE OF MARY MOTHER

‘WHAT did he answer?’ asked Mary Mother, caressing the dark bowed head. ‘His hand was laid in blessing upon my hair. O who can understand the strange rejoinder of that motionless hand? The birds reply through the pines? answer of the ember that sparks into light? I do not well remember,’ Magdalen spoke—her words as deeply humming as a bee in a blossom—‘the world before his coming. Therefore I find no image that resembles the touch that, though it never falters, trembles through all the blood and draws it, drop by drop, till it would seem the heart itself must stop. Still is there something. Once the earliest snow feathered the pines, and in the world below the sun still walked upon a golden sea of tumbled light, as once in Galilee that Other walked. But, as through sunshine wading, I gazed upon that purer world invading this dazzled world of colour, it seemed as though there were surpassing virtue in the “No” which did in silver opposition bless, while it denied, the troubled world of “Yes”’.

Perhaps his hand (and who shall ever know?  
Not I,' she murmured) 'answered with the snow.'  
Mary the Mother was silent. There is a way  
by which the cattle wander in early May  
above the highest chalets. You hear the bells  
in certain flaws of the wind ring all their swells  
and tiny changes as if far bellringers  
were setting spring upon the mountains to verse.  
Those bells were ringing now. 'A little sound,'  
she said at last, 'may leave so deep a wound,  
'it bleeds when the heart no longer beats.' She smiled.  
'I who play Mary Mother have no child.  
I have heard those bells how often promising  
to trees and bird and beast the gift of spring.  
"Life," they rang softly, "life and life and life."  
I could almost feel the handle of the knife  
that cut my heart-strings. My companions—  
the girls that I had played with—were blessed with sons  
fresh as a pat of butter, daughters like lace,  
so light their fingers brushing on my face.  
And still I wondered and waited till at last,  
when only the bells remained of all the past  
to ring my lost hopes home, because my throat  
miraculously kept the singer's note  
cool with those tears unshed, those thanks unvowed  
they bad me play. I could have laughed aloud  
like Sarah in her age, and mocked, like her,

God in his mercy. I was quieter,  
but no less bitter, as I answered "Yes".  
And one who understood my bitterness  
wrought with me daily with never a word spoken,  
until one night, when the dark spell was broken,  
I cried to him who entered, "God's will be done!"  
and the night whispered, "Mother! behold your son!"

'Not he, but the night,' the girl said. 'The night, not he  
the other answered. 'And I do not see  
the end of the way for him. My heart hearkens  
always, and always the shadow about him darkens.  
And almost, it seems, he walks into his fate  
as into a house he knew. Could he not wait  
a little? It has been so short a while  
since the first evening and the first grave smile,  
so short a time to have, and to watch about him,  
so very long a time to be without him.'  
'Mother,' said the girl in a deep and trembling voice,  
'He goes to his fate, but is it by his choice?'  
'What have you heard?' said Mary. 'What do you know  
'Nothing except all day the whispers go  
about the village.' 'There is a damnable plot.  
I know it by the way Iscariot  
is always at his side, and all the others  
avoid him.' The low whisper is Mary Mother's.

‘Not Peter,’ the girl says. ‘Even Peter has gone a little from him.’ ‘Who is there?’ ‘Only John. And we must speak with John. We dare not warn him lest he should think by love we would suborn him from what he has to do, but he might listen to John that he loves so.’ ‘Hasten, mother, hasten.’ But as they pass the lintel suddenly the girl turns. ‘Mother, who and what is he?’

## IV

### AN UPPER ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF PONTIUS PILATE

‘AND so you see, they leave it to our discretion.’  
‘What of his birth?’ said Peter. ‘His confession should be enough,’ Hans answered with a shrug.  
‘A Jew, you know, is very like a bug, invisible until he bites. The German habit is to anticipate the vermin by biting first, whether on louse or termit.’  
‘No doubt,’ said Peter, ‘but they don’t confirm it.’  
‘The point is vital,’ Judas stole a look across the table to Kanalgeruch :  
‘Is there no private letter you thought best to leave unread in the public interest?’ he asked. ‘Could we perhaps not hear the gist without a breach of confidence?’ ‘If you insist,’ grumbled the other, groping in the mound of papers stacked before him. ‘Is it found?’ said Pontius Pilate suavely. ‘For if not, could you not leave it to Iscariot to improvise it?’ Judas rapped out an oath.  
‘What are you hinting, Pontius?’ ‘I am loth,’ Pilate replied, his voice like a stiletto,  
‘to minimize your knowledge of the Ghetto,

or to restrain your native enthusiasm based on that knowledge. (Judas checked a spasm of shocking fury.) But to-night our task is not to manufacture facts, but to ask what proofs we have, and these assembled, whether to act or overlook them altogether, as I suggest, reading between the lines would be the course to which Berlin inclines.'

Still shaken with some ecstasy of hate (or was it fear?) Judas exclaimed, 'Why wait for further proofs than what the letter gives? No passport—none knows where and how he lives, nor whence he came nor by what route. He has for name a most transparent alias.

What more, I say, is needed to prove the man at best a histrionic charlatan.

At worst—' 'Yes,' Pontius interposed, 'at worst' 'of all accursed things the most accursed—a Jew confessed by person and behaviour, who does not merely act but is the Saviour. I would, I think, suggest a way to humour his fancy to the end.' Succeeded a rumour of ugly sound. 'I need not say,' cried Hans, 'how heartily I agree, but as to plans,

it is a trifle early to decide.’—

‘The verdict,’ said Pilate, ‘before the case is tried.’

Hans banged the board. ‘Pontius, your attitude is liable to be misunderstood.

I should be sorry indeed if you compelled me to think you lukewarm in the cause,’ ‘and belled me out of the party,’ smiled Pontius, ‘as an example. I bow my head and listen. The threat is ample.’

‘No threat, dear Pontius, but we cannot permit our dearest friend to exercise his wit—’

‘At a moment when,’ three others cried in chorus, ‘he is against us, who is not wholly for us.’

‘The incident is closed,’ said Hans, ‘and now

I ask you men of Oberammergau

what is your verdict. And let me remind you

the German generations stand behind you

as pure and stainless as that snowy ruffle

about the shoulders of Bavarian Kofel.

They died, they suffered, they faced the pangs of Hell to make this solemn moment possible

when you, in turn, in whom the sacred trust is reposed to be the instruments of justice,

will, standing to attention, cry with me,

“Justice whose name in heaven is Germany.”’



They shuffled to their feet with hands outstretched in the Roman salute, their faces deeply etched with all the gamut of passion—anger, devotion, self-sacrifice, fear, doubt and an emotion compounded of all these in the abyss, and known to the Father of Lies as patriotism. They stood for an instant so as in a drawing of souls in Dante's Hell, a demon clawing at the hair blown backward and the fingers curled in the last desperate clutch upon the world of light they left for ever. Peter heard (or so his tortured eyes confessed) a bird crowing to the dawn. 'Damned,' said a whisper, 'damned,' but as he turned to go, the door was slammed, and Hans stood smiling in his path. 'No need to leave us, Peter, since we are all agreed.'

He looked round with a smile of satisfaction. 'It only needs to choose the appropriate action. Won't you be seated? I venture to propose because the detail may be otiose, and waste of time for all would be a pity, that you should nominate a sub-Committee. If you agree, Judas, who claims that he has a scheme, might serve for one, and Caiaphas

as the village lawyer, for the second, then—'  
'You,' cried they all. 'I thank you, gentlemen.  
Our business is concluded. And if I may  
ask my two fellow-executives to stay  
we might break up.' 'First drink a silent glass  
to him who guides us all,' said Caiaphas.

They drank a little doubtful of the toast.  
Some pledged the Herr Director's health, the most  
drank to the Leader of them all, but one  
set down the glass before he had begun,  
for as he raised the wine a cadence, sweeter  
in the hushed moment than life itself, sighed, 'Peter.'  
They trooped out slowly, like conspirators  
detected in a crime. Hans locked the doors,  
returning sharply, when all the rest were gone,  
to cry to the two remaining, 'Where was John?'

## JOHN ALONE

JOHN was walking by the water of the Ammer.  
(Look to your hammer, Thor, look to your hammer !)  
It flows through the pines, O God ! how far to the sea.  
(How many miles, John, to Gethsemane ?)  
Clear bright brown water, over the pebbly bed.  
(But where shall the Master, John, lay his head ?)  
Was that a voice singing—or only a thrush ?  
(or your own heart beating, John. Hush, oh hush !)  
Yes, but in the clearing at the end of the ride ?  
(’Tis a trick of the light on the hands and side !)  
There is one standing with a shadowy crown,  
(only a shadow, or have they lifted him down ?)  
John walks by the Ammer at evening alone.  
(There is nobody here, John. They have rolled the stone.)  
John walks by the Ammer. He kneels to pray.  
(Look up, (Do you hear, John ?) It is rolled away.)  
John returns at nightfall from the moonsweet Ammer.  
(Look to your hammer, Thor, look to your hammer !)

## VI

### JOHN AND THE TWO MARYS

THE house of John was empty When they knocked  
there was no answer. Only the echo mocked  
the tremulous signal. They did not dare to linger,  
but Mary Mother rubbed a gentle finger  
across the blackened window-pane. The noise  
hissed at them in the darkness like a voice.  
'Did you hear, Mother,' murmured Magdalene.  
'Only the wind,' she answered. 'It is keen.  
I feel it at my heart.' 'Be still! I hear  
a step in the night.' Between delight and fear  
the women waited. One said suddenly,  
catching the other's hand, 'It is not he.'  
As in a sculptured grouping in the gloom,  
like that of others by an open tomb,  
fearing they knew not what, they clung together,  
and when the footsteps lighter than a feather  
drew near, as those sobbed, 'A centurion,'  
so crying 'Judas' these heard the voice of John.

The mountain-wind, God's Galahad of the air,  
rides, all in silver clipt, on his affair,  
and where he passes evil sin and shame  
puff like black smoke distorted by a flame—

spear at the breast of the devil, but the sure  
buckler of those, whose hearts, like his, are pure.

So with the wind came John, so lifted, so lighted,  
so like a name in the lists, by the trumpet recited  
of the heraldic moon. And seeing him thus  
splendid with conquest, 'He is saved for us,'  
the women cried together. With bright compassion  
John answered, 'Saved—but saved in his own fashion.'  
And passed them by. The words fell cold and chill.  
The wind abated. The village lay so still,  
their tired feet rang like an oath as they went,  
and the snowy ruffle at Kofel's throat was rent.

## TAIL-PIECE

COVER your eyes. Now the last light is shaken  
from Alp to Alp, waiting for night to garner  
the scattered ears in the vast fields, forsaken  
by the bright sickle, that at the furthest corner  
of evening leaves  
brilliant on the highest snow a few and fallen sheaves.

Now all is shadow. Bleak as the Pole the scars  
launch into distance, leaning to the bow,  
an icy arrow, tipped with the first of the stars  
and feathered with the pinion of the snow,  
which finds its mark  
unflinching as death itself through the dark.

Go down to death. Though bitter be the road  
and the end utter blackness, yet swift and sudden  
its dreadful course. And he that never owed  
quiet or consolation, here, unhidden,  
shall sleep set free  
from Calvary to wake (who says ?) in Calvary.

Who says in Calvary? Desperate the abyss,  
the violent night about and none beside us!  
Go down to death. Beyond the precipice  
the ultimate peak, whose last moraine defied us,  
affirms, it seems,  
a dream of further light we knew not in our dreams.

Go down to death. One chose that angry path  
of his free will, marking the road you pace.  
He laid his hands upon the lips of death,  
and looked with such a glory in his face  
that death was drawn  
upwards and out like an angel into the dawn.

Thou fearest still! Come with me by the way  
that climbs to where the sky and morning mingle  
in soft collision, over Lautaret,  
and after the terrors of night, sob on a single  
breath of bright rage:  
'Here heaven and dawn returning salute the Meije.'





## PART III

### PROEM

MEN choose their gods, and worship them, and break them.

Wood-altar, desert-sphinx and mountain shrine  
retain their trace, and, after their lovers forsake them,

leaves dapple with shade, sands hotly underline,

and snows retrieve

with their cold script the half-truths none will now believe.

Such gods are made in man's own image, broken

with changing fashions, idols of fear or curse,

but there is one no star has ever spoken

in its long cruise abaft the universe,

one whose cold glory

needs neither marbled bust, temple, nor oratory.

Men may destroy his altars and desert him,

but, since he is before all altars were,

they could not glorify, as they cannot hurt, him,

in loss and desecration not lonelier

than when the hands

upraised in worship outnumbered the Atlantic sands.

He is of himself, not theirs, and what they plan  
was his before they planned it, and, though they slay him,  
he died and rose again ere the years began,  
and the pale phantom, in which their thoughts array him,  
suffers and dies  
not in his essence, but in vicarious sacrifice.

Knit your great brows of granite, Kofel. Tighten  
the hammer at your wrist. The time is now.  
Vast shadows darken, forked destructions lighten  
over your village of Oberammergau  
and, as they burn,  
giant, look to the West and strike! Your gods return.

## THE IRREGULAR CHORUS

REPETITION générale—

or as you might say merely repetition.

(We need not, need we, Master, after all  
translate with too pedantic a precision?)

And after the dress-rehearsal

with all its flurry, uncertainty and fright,  
it will be in the natural reversal  
of things theatrical, all right upon the night.

All the old properties are fortunately

available, and though it's true the actors  
have changed, they have not really altered greatly,  
and there are certain new box-office factors

known only to the Director and the Committee.

(Goethe war es der sagte 'Licht mehr licht')  
and even if the heart should break for pity  
(as Heinrich Heine said) 'Ich grolle nicht.'

‘Ich grolle nicht.’ Who are we to complain  
if the same hand on the same catapult  
snaps the great thong of agony again,  
and, as it happens, with the same result.

No time for weeping now, and no more cause.

He has pulled the pillars down. The darkness slams on  
all doubt all terror, and, free of all these flaws,  
Samson ascends imperishably Samson.

## II

### EXTRACT FROM HANS KANAL- GERUCH'S LETTER COVERING HIS WEEKLY REPORT TO HEAD- QUARTERS

IN accordance with instructions I append my usual weekly report. This one will end the present series. The affair will be complete (if all goes as we plan) before its receipt. If your High Well-Born Person will allow, I should like to have it placed on record now that, though the fellow must at least have guessed what threatens him, he has not dared to protest. This I ascribe to craven terror—no new trait (as we know) in a convicted Jew. But if it had been possible to take an interest in such a creature, I should make this observation (speaking, I insist, like any other entomologist). The man excites in most the liveliest loathing—his voice, his hands, his eyes, his very clothing affects me with physical nausea—a feeling common to every decent-thinking man and woman. He does however number (see my report) sufficient followers of the baser sort

to have made so great a tumult, had he acceded to their request to stand wherever he did, it might have stopped the contemplated action. It is a matter for personal satisfaction, I venture to think, that the consciousness of guilt, combined with some small rattling on the hilt of my Germanic sabre, almost with his consent march him to-morrow to his punishment.

I add one point. You perfectly understand that the dramatic action we have planned for the first public presentation, may not merely interrupt the Passion-play, but stop it altogether—a serious matter with all our world-commitments—but these latter we may ignore, since happen best or worst, my motto is and will be, ‘Germany first,’ and you not only agreed, but laid it down, ‘No Jewish Cross shall earn one German Crown.’

As always your most obedient servant K.  
P.S. I have just learned (in the usual way)\* that certain of his followers intend to sup with him to-night, led by his friend John (vide pages 3 to 9). Unpleasant, but Judas, by arrangement, will be present.

### III

## OUTSIDE THE ROOM WHERE THEY ARE SUPPING

THE eagles have flown to their eyrie.

(Wings over the mountains, says Mary to Mary.)

The air is empty of royal wings.

(That is a vulture that whistles and rings.)

He passed us by, a beloved stranger.

(What is thy secret, Lord, what thy danger?)

The flawless brow, but the eyes how weary!

(Rest cometh soon, says Mary to Mary.)

They have prayed to him, but he will not hearken.

(It is only the clouds that tremble and darken.)

He has broken the bread and blessed it. Listen!

(What are these feet that cunningly hasten?)

He has chosen his path and it will not vary,

(and he is Jesus, sobs Mary to Mary).

The inner door flew open. With a clot  
of blood at the side of his mouth, Iscariot  
like a sleepwalker, in passing, muttered thickly,  
'That which thou hast to do, be it done quickly.'

IV

NEXT MORNING AT SUNRISE

AN UPLAND PASTURE ON MOUNT KOFEL

KANALGERUCH. The storm-troopers grow restless. You  
are certain,

Judas ?

JUDAS. Wait only till the heavy curtain  
of the mist unrolls. Believe me he has only  
struck upward for an hour to be lonely  
with his own thought.

KANALGERUCH. Suppose that he has fled  
to Austria, and passed the guards ?

JUDAS. My head  
is forfeit if he has escaped us.

FIRST STORM TROOPER. Master,  
I found this cloak upon a rock.

KANALGERUCH. Move faster !  
I have seen him wear it often.

FIRST STORM TROOPER. If it be his,  
look for his body by the precipice !  
I should not blame him !

SECOND STORM TROOPER. Sir, I beg your pardon.  
Look to that patch of flowers, like a garden.  
I know the place. Narcissus and the vetches  
climb to your shoulder, and the perfume catches  
—crisp as a biscuit—at your throat.



KANALGERUCH. What then?

SECOND STORM TROOPER. Between the flowers, look! The forms of men.

KANALGERUCH. Shepherds asleep!

JUDAS. Not shepherds.

SECOND STORM TROOPER. No! they sprawl, like men lost on the mountain.

KANALGERUCH. Up and crawl quietly between them!

JUDAS. Wait! Look higher still between the fir-trees!

FIRST STORM TROOPER. Dawn's great daffodil dabbles his face!

KANALGERUCH. He wakes the shepherds.

JUDAS. Abate! here echoes carry far.

A VOICE. Could you not wait an hour with me?

VOICES. Forgive us. We were foregone with what consumed our very bones.

THE VOICE. Nay John? Nay Peter—it is nothing!

THE VOICES. Master! see! All these upon the slopes.

THE VOICE. They seek for me, and all who seek shall find, though the heart rot against my lips. Kiss me, Iscariot!

ON THE ROAD TO THE PASSION-  
PLAY

WHITHER are you bound? What go you forth to see—  
you thousands in your many-coloured crowd?  
A reed that is shaken by the river—or a tree  
by the dark fruit, not of its growing, bowed?

Do you make festival, or mere holiday?  
Is it in idle wonder from all earth's lands  
strangers, that you come? and will you, astounded, pray  
till the whole sky is hidden with your hands?

The village street mounts sharply past pine chalets  
under the mountains in one enormous booth  
of a roaring fair that overwhelms the valleys—  
Vanity Fair? or the rendez-vous with truth?

Under what sign? Orion, Mars, or Lyra  
seek you for Mecca or the buskinned stage?  
Or have you heard how on the long Hejira  
Mahomet's followers make their pilgrimage

through pitiless sun, through thirst, through dreadful reaches  
of desert where the only mark to guide them  
is here and there a skeleton that bleaches—  
And still they follow. Do you walk beside them

not by the paths they tread, but in their spirit  
under faith's sun invisible, angrier far,  
through deserts of thought that pluck deep Hell to wear it—  
to perish, or find what legendary star?

Stream on, stream on, to your appointed places.

Here is the playhouse open to the skies.  
And here there walks across a sea of faces  
softer than shadow, the angel that denies,

deeper than shadow—or will it be the fire  
that overtakes the morning, and surprises  
in the mid-desert with domes of the heart's desire  
the wandered pilgrim? Wait! The curtain rises.

## VI

### THE LUNCHEON INTERVAL

#### A GROUP OF AMERICANS.

Say was it cold? Or was it cold? It sure  
has old man iceberg beat. Here listen, sugar!  
that Herr Director's throat needs pedicure.  
All corns and bunions.

Reub, don't act meshuggar!

This show is different. When I heard his voice  
it got me sure and hard behind the shimmy.  
Who is he, anyhow?

One of the boys  
who knows to shoot his mouth off. Cognac? Gimme.

#### A FRENCH GROUP.

Il a du toupet, ce type, d'avoir commencé  
avec ce discours franchement de la politique.  
C'est le bon dieu lui-même qu'ils veulent faire danser—  
aux ordres du grand directeur.

Ça s'explique.

C'est une confusion entre Je et Il  
dans la langue allemande. Tout de même j'insiste  
que celui, qui le joue, porte le panache  
et—(j'ose dire)—le visage du Jésus-Christ.

#### AN ENGLISH GROUP.

‘ Really these Germans have no sense of humour.

What could possess them to let that fellow loose?

Reminded me of a malignant tumour

with a voice between a jackal and a moose.’

‘ Which made the contrast with the man who played

the leading part almost enough to freeze us

with dreadful and lovely surprise. I am afraid.’

‘ Afraid, you goose, of what?’ ‘ I think of Jesus.’

#### A GERMAN GROUP.

‘ Fabelhaft der Herr Direktor—das ganze Stück

War kolossal. Doch schien mir ’—‘ Bist du müde

Kindchen? Wir sitzen gleich ’—‘ beim ersten Blick

Der Hauptdarsteller gleicht fast einem Juden.’

‘ Bin deiner Meinung, Schatz! Doch als er sagte;

“ Lasset sie kommen in mein Arme, die Kleinen ”

etwas tief in der Seele erwachte und klagte ’

‘ Und du hast angefangen—wie jetzt—zu weinen.’

#### BABEL OF RETREATING VOICES.

‘ He gets me where I live.’ ‘ Il me retourne

toujours, toujours. C’est curieux.’ ‘ Du weisst

ich seh ihn noch.’ ‘ Almost mine eyelids burn.’

‘ Le Jésus-Christ—der Jesus—Christ, oh Christ.’

## VII

### BEHIND THE SCENES PETER HEARS THE IRREGULAR CHORUS

'THEY bare him up, they bare him down.'

Thief,

you have robbed the night of darkness,  
the day of grief.

There is no dark like the blackness

you leave, no pain

as of voices crying,

'He has come again,'

as of voices crying,

'He has come. He has gone.'

Thief of the gardens

in Babylon,

of the hanging gardens

with their leisurely trees,

and of the heart acquainted

with terraced peace.

Shrivel all blossom !'  
The Greek boatman Charon  
beats with his paddle  
on the rose of Sharon.

The pitiless waters  
of death run sweeter ;  
but the rose is drowning  
slowly, Peter.

The rose is drowning  
where the flood runs fleeter—  
drowning, drowning,  
drowning, Peter.

·VIII

HERR KANALGERUCH MAKES THE  
FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

KANALGERUCH. Is all in order ?

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. Yes, sir. Fifty or more are posted behind the stage to guard the door, served with ball-cartridge. The main body waits in the wood below until you close the gates, when they will take their positions to prevent panic or any untoward incident among the spectators.

KANALGERUCH. You are sure there were none of the cast that left the theatre ?

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. Certain. Immediately the mob had gone we rounded up the actors.

KANALGERUCH. Those women and John ?

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS were talking together quietly. The girl was weeping and did not look up as I passed.

KANALGERUCH. It is in keeping with the part she has to play. And he ?

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. He stood a little apart, looking as though he would hug the whole world to his breast. He looked me deep in the eyes. I shall remember when I sleep that he looked me deep in the eyes.



KANALGERUCH.

What of it, man.

He must look somewhere.

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. Was it yours the plan, or his?

KANALGERUCH. I do not understand you, sir. Beware lest I suspect you.

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. I do not greatly care. The light was in his face.

KANALGERUCH. Remember, sir, Who, where and what you are.

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. A soldier and under orders. I remember.

KANALGERUCH. Good! Then act as such. What happened next?

CAPTAIN OF STORM-TROOPERS. He stood motionless, till those others, John and the Marys, crossed to his side and cried aloud, 'Lord, where is the light of the world?' and, falling, knelt before him with clutching hands and eyes that did adore him. He laid his hands upon the Magdalen's head with a soft musing kindness, and nothing said. Then raising John and Mary, joined each to other handfast, and whispered, 'Son, behold your mother.'

KANALGERUCH. About your duty! Enough of fairy-tales. See that you fail not.

(*To a man who enters.*) Well?

THE STAGE CARPENTER.

These are the nails.

IX

A STREET IN OBERAMMERGAU  
LATER THAT AFTERNOON

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. Kofel wore a cloud so like a fist  
of smoke  
the night twelve years ago, when I awoke  
and a low moon sparkled like a ring on the thumb,  
and then the avalanche, and kingdom come.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. This one is greater, and more  
threatening,  
and look! blood-red the jewel in the ring!

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Nonsense! The last beam of the  
sun on the mist.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. I can see the fingers clutched  
against the wrist  
as if about to throw.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Will you be quiet?  
You frighten the children.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. That was a sound of riot  
suddenly from the playhouse. Did you hear?

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Rubbish, my girl! Can't the  
spectators cheer  
the end of a great performance?

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. I never heard  
a cheer like that. The echo stayed and stirred,

and darkened on the air. I almost saw it  
rise like a mountain-hawk on the light and claw it.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. You always were a fool, my child.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. And now  
a mist is drawing over Ammergau.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. Look! at the darkness over the  
theatre!

and that sound of distant weeping.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Don't listen to her!  
children. It is only Magda at her fancies.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. Look to the fist! Is that a beam  
that glances  
like lightning from the Jewel?

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. It *is* lightning.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. But look again! As though the  
hand were tightening  
about a hammer to smash the world asunder.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. And that vast rolling roar.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN (*more faintly*). Only the thunder  
echoing through the mountains.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. Hark, O hark  
to the voice like a trumpet.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. It grows so dark.  
I cannot see my hands.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. There is a noise  
as of a man running toward us.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. The voice, the voice!

Did you not hear the voice?

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Come with me a short way  
into the mist to see who comes.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN (*as they turn, in a dreadful voice*).

Stay O stay!

and for the sake of Jesus Christ look not behind.

I have seen the light on Kofel. I am blind.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN (*as the shape approaches*). It is  
poor Friedrich, the idiot—covered with mud  
and his clothes torn.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. His face is altered.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. 'Blood.

I am washed in the blood of the Lamb.'

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. One of his fits!  
What did they do to frighten you, poor Fritz!

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. They shouted and they were quiet.  
Then I fell.

The burning words in the darkness:

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. Tell us! Tell!

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. The words

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Yes, Fritz, the words

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. flew one by one,  
and men cried aloud, and there was no more sun. °

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. Something has happened.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. Something dreadful.

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN. Blind!  
yet I can see.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. She is shaken out of her mind.  
Welh, Fritz?

THE VILLAGE IDIOT. They shouted together, but the words  
made  
a little sound as they passed, 'Be not afraid,  
Friedrich.' 'I am washed in the Blood!'

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. God help my heart!

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN (*sharply*). Two are enough? For  
Jesus' sake don't start!

THE VILLAGE IDIOT (*laughing aloud*). For Jesus' sake.

SECOND VILLAGE WOMAN. O Christ.

THIRD VILLAGE WOMAN. The words, poor zany—

FIRST VILLAGE WOMAN (*with a sob*). Were, 'eli eli lama  
sabachthani.'

X

THE IRREGULAR CHORUS HEARD  
FAR OFF

THE crooked cross  
(Nicht war, mein lieber  
Herr Commerzienrath,  
the trade-mark of the Schieber?)

rides high ascendant  
like two Z's on end,  
the sign resplendent  
of a hairpin bend.

The pass-word is Eastward?  
or Westward Ho?  
Godwards or Beastward?  
Or both? Ach so!

Godwards and beastward—  
left and right,  
Westward and eastward,  
day and night.

Arminius with his' boot on  
the star in the East—  
and God a Teuton,  
and Herr Müller his priest.

Arminius. Vicisti—  
Messieurs, a toast.  
'Brown shirts (nés fascisti)—  
—and the Holy Ghost,

who mistily passes  
as they make the sign  
of the crooked crosses,  
and changes the wine.'

Snuffing like cattle  
that chew the cud,  
it seems that their spittle  
is stained with blood.

The bread is shoddy,  
the wine is mud.  
'You eat my body,  
you drink my blood.'

‘ Father, forgive them ! ’

(The crooked symbol  
painted above them  
begins to tremble).

‘ Father, they know not  
what they do ! ’

(But the banners flow not  
as they flew.)

The symbol distending  
its crooked talons,  
like an iron branding  
the forehead of felons,

leans out and lingers  
till the revellers start  
with the crooked fingers  
clawing their heart.

It bites, it lashes,  
and, as they travail,  
out of the ashes  
the talons unravel.



The cross-bars straighten,  
straight is the mast,  
and the symbol of Satan  
melts like a ghost.

But one acquainted  
with death and loss  
and the nails unblunted  
of the other cross,

like unguent slaking  
spirit and bone  
heals both by making  
the wounds his own,

and cries with the vivid  
beauty of a flame,  
' 'Twas for this, beloved,  
that I came.'

## TAIL-PIECE

### MARY MOTHER LEADS THE CHORUS

HE bade us not to weep. Women, be tearless !

He has passed beyond your tears. His pain, his grief  
are incommunicable as they are peerless.

Mar them not by your sorrowful disbelief

nor seek to bear

the burden that he carries and that none can share.

He has taken on him the load of all our dying.

What tears, what ashes strewn upon the head  
are more than the shadow of betrayal crying,

'He loved. He was our Lord,—and he is dead—'

a shadow that cries,

women, in your hearts affrighted abominable lies.

He has gone down to death by a steep longer

than any after him shall face. 'Tis pathless,

hyssop to ease his throat, and gall for hunger,

with merciless swords against him. What then, O faithless,

what dark, what sword,

what thirst, what hunger shall prevail upon the Lord ?

The old dead patter at his feet like leaves,  
dark wings beat at his face. And at the gates,  
that open inward only under crook'd eaves,  
a great bat, hanging downwards, Satan waits  
and whistles, ' Can  
the angels of light support thee now, oh Son of Man ?'

He does not answer. The radiance answers for him  
of the wounds in his hands, his feet and in his side,  
and while the dead with pitiful hands implore him,  
and the devil mocks, ' Behold the crucified !'  
immutable  
by his mere presence he makes a heaven of hell.

He has gone down to death. Cease, women, your sorrow.  
There is naught for you to lament and naught to cry on.  
He has taken death under his arm like an arrow  
whose barb is broken. Lift up your gates, O Zion.  
The beacon burns  
beyond the world. He is risen. Christ returns.

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